



The State of New Hampshire
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES



Thomas S. Burack, Commissioner

February 5, 2008

The Honorable Robert Theberge, Chairman
Municipal and County Government
Legislative Office Building, Room 301
Concord, NH 03301

RE: HB 1581, relative to the formation of stormwater utility districts.

Dear Chairman Theberge:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 1581, which would enable municipalities to create stormwater utilities. The Department of Environmental Services (DES) supports this bill.

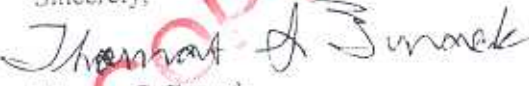
Stormwater is emerging as the most important surface water quality issue facing New Hampshire for a number of reasons, including the following:

- Stormwater runoff, especially from the developed landscape, can be a source of pollutants that degrade water quality. These pollutants include bacteria, the nutrients nitrogen and phosphorus, oil and grease, and chloride from salt used for the deicing of roads and parking lots. Unless managed properly, pollutants in stormwater and changes in hydrology can cause water quality degradation of surface waters.
- Municipal separate stormwater systems (MS4s) are facing more stringent federal regulations adopted by the USEPA under the federal Clean Water Act, in recognition of the negative water quality impacts of uncontrolled stormwater discharges.
- Stormwater systems are networks of piping conveying water, just like water and sewer systems, but historically have not had similar dedicated revenue streams for required maintenance and upkeep.
- Extreme storm events may be occurring more frequently due to climate change, sometimes overwhelming existing systems and raising questions as to how to pay for stormwater system upgrades.

This bill will enable municipalities to create stormwater utilities similar to water or wastewater utilities, and raise needed funds through user fees for required maintenance and stormwater system improvements. Numerous studies have confirmed that there is a direct relationship between the impervious surfaces (rooftops and pavement) on a property and water quality degradation caused by stormwater. For municipalities who choose to form a utility, this bill offers a reliable way to address serious infrastructure needs.

In summary, DES fully supports HB 1581. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation. If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to call Eric Williams at 271-2358 or me at 271-3449.

Sincerely,


Thomas S. Burack
Commissioner

cc: Rep. Fargo